The SOUL-SEARING CONCLUSION!

MIDNIGHT SONS UNLIMITED

SIEGE OF DARKNESS PART 7

MARVEL MIDNIGHT SONS

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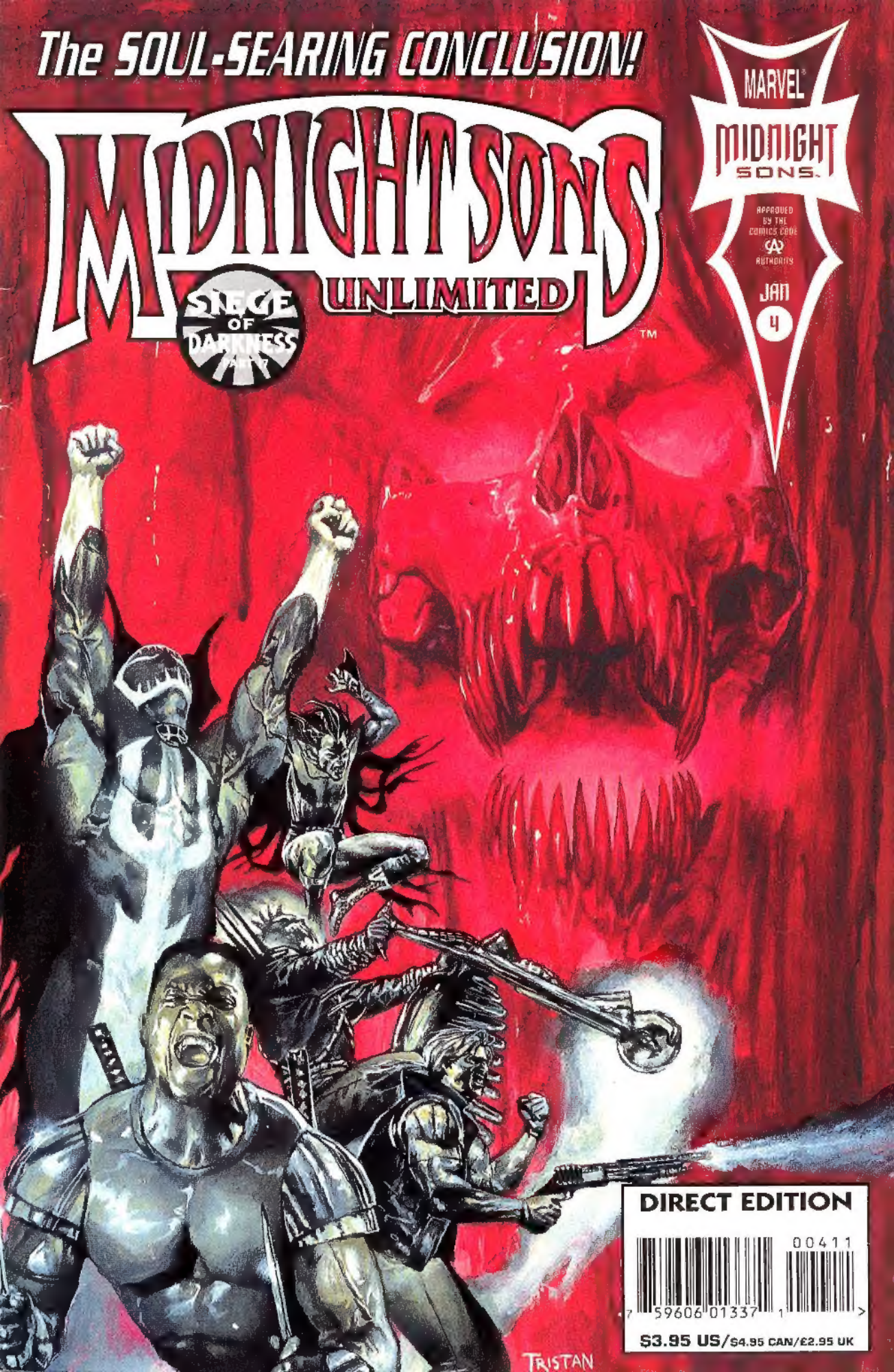

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BEFORE THERE WAS WRITTEN HISTORY, THEY MADE HISTORY.
THE ORDER OF THE MIDNIGHT SONS.
IN A TIME LONG SINCE PAST, THEY WERE THE ONLY ONES WILLING TO JOURNEY DOWN AMONG THE SHADOWS--
--SAVAGE EVIL WITH NAMES LIKE LILIN AND ZARATHOS AND THE FALLEN.
ARMED ONLY WITH THEIR IDEALS--
--AND FURIOUS, TERRIFYING POWER--
--THE MIDNIGHT SONS FOUGHT TO BRING LIGHT INTO THE DARKNESS.

MORAL COURAGE

WRITER	D. G. CHICHESTER
PENCILERS	JOHN HIXSON (PP. 1-26, 45-57)
	JOHN BRIDGES (27-44, 58-64)
INKERS	BILL ANDERSON (1-22)
	RICH RANKIN (23-26, 45-57)
	SCOTT KOBLISH (27-44, 58-64)
LETTERER	GAIL BECKETT
COLORIST	MIKE WORLEY
EDITOR	EVAN SKOLNICK
GROUP EDITOR	BOBBIE CHASE
EDITOR IN CHIEF	TOM DEFALCO

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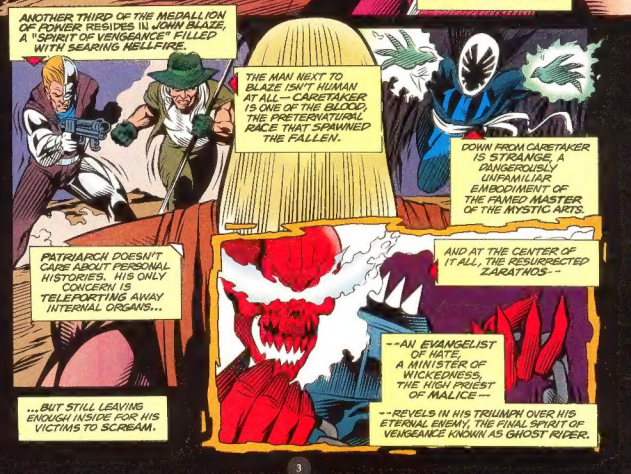
TODAY. GLASTONBURY TOR, ENGLAND.
THE SHADOWS HAVE RETURNED, SPREADING THEIR TAINT ONCE MORE ACROSS THE LAND.
BREAK THROUGH THE FALLEN TO ZARATHOS -- ONCE HE GOES DOWN, HIS FOLLOWERS WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP GOING!
AND KNIGHTLY LEGENDS OF OLD ARE AS DEAD AND BURIED AS THE AGES-OLD SOLDIERS IN THE MOUND BENEATH THESE CASTLE RUINS.
ON THE ONE SIDE, A CHAOTIC UNION OF SUPERNATURALLY CHARGED WARRIORS.
ON THE OTHER SIDE, AN ORDER OF ZEALOTS KNOWN AS THE FALLEN.

THE VAMPIRES--
--ONE A TWISTED VARIATION ON "LIVING," THE OTHER A DEVIANT INTERPRETATION OF "UNDEAD" --
--ARE MICHAEL MORBIUS AND HANNIBAL KING.
HANDLING THE OCCULT-TUNED WEAPON CALLED "THE EXORCIST" IS FRANK DRAKE, DESCENDANT OF A FIEND CALLED DRACULA.
ATROCITY'S PLAN IS TO BLEED THEM ALL DRY.
VENGEANCE IS MICHAEL BADALINO, ONE-THIRD OF AN ORGANIC MEDALLION OF POWER.
BLADE IS AN ORPHAN, HIS MOTHER KILLED BY A BLOODSUCKER, HIS EXISTENCE DEDICATED TO HUNTING THINGS OF MAGICK.


ANOTHER THIRD OF THE MEDALLION OF POWER RESIDES IN JOHN BLAZE, A "SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE" FILLED WITH SEARING HELLFIRE.
PATRIARCH DOESN'T CARE ABOUT PERSONAL HISTORIES. HIS ONLY CONCERN IS TELEPORTING AWAY INTERNAL ORGANS...
...BUT STILL LEAVING ENOUGH INSIDE FOR HIS VICTIMS TO SCREAM.
THE MAN NEXT TO BLAZE ISN'T HUMAN AT ALL -- CARETAKER IS ONE OF THE BLOOD, THE PRETERNATURAL RACE THAT SPAWNED THE FALLEN.
DOWN FROM CARETAKER IS STRANGE, A DANGEROUSLY UNFAMILIAR EMBODIMENT OF THE FAMED MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS.
AND AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL, THE RESURRECTED ZARATHOS --
--AN EVANGELIST OF HATE, A MINISTER OF WICKEDNESS, THE HIGH PRIEST OF MALICE --
--REVELS IN HIS TRIUMPH OVER HIS ETERNAL ENEMY, THE FINAL SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE KNOWN AS GHOST RIDER.

YOU FELL SO EASILY, HATED ADVERSARY! MY POWER COULD NOT BE RESISTED--CONSUMED YOUR VERY BEING!
NOW YOUR TOOLS ARE MY TROPHIES... AND YOUR ALLIES WILL FEED THE HUNGER OF MY DISCIPLES!
DRIVE HIM INTO THE EXORCIST-NANOTECH MOTORS IN THE PLASMA CHARGE WILL TEAR HIM UP AT THE CELLULAR LEVEL!
ONLY IF YOU AND "LINDA BLAIR" THERE WANNA MAKE TIME WITH A CORPSE, FRANK!
YOUR FELLOW NIGHTSTALKER SPEAKS TRUE, DRAKE-- WE DON'T INTEND TO LEAVE ANYTHING LIVING!
IMPUDENT REVENANT! I'M NOT CALLED "ATROCITY" WITHOUT REASON!
SKRAAM
NOT FOR WHAT I DO, BUT FOR WHAT I AM! MY VERY BEING IS AN OFFENSE TO NATURE!
MY SWEAT SPLASHES LIKE CRASHING WAVES... MY SKIN FLAKES OFF AND SETS THE EARTH TO TREMOR...
...MY EYES BURN WITH THE POWER OF THE HEAVENS THEMSELVES!
IT'S TOO HOT-- DRYING OUT MY MIST!
CURSED RAYS-- EATING AT MY FLESH!
FALL BACK BEFORE WE'RE--

YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH HITTING A LADY, BLADE?
YOU SEE A LADY AROUND HERE?
MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART!
THIS FORM IS FRAIL, VENGEANCE--
--BUT THE DRAGON CALLED URIZEN KNOWS NO SUCH WEAKNESS!
FWROOSH
AND FOR YOU, SWORDSMAN... THE HYDRA!
CUT OFF MY HEAD... TREMBLE AS TWO REPLACE EVERY ONE YOU TAKE... BEG AS THEY STRIP THE FLESH FROM YOUR BONES!
ALL RIGHT, SO MAYBE WE SHOULDA BEEN MORE GENTLEMAN-LIKE...

YOU SHOULD'VE JOINED THE FALLEN LONG AGO, CARETAKER... INSTEAD OF WAITING FOR US TO RETURN AND FINISH YOU!
IS THIS THE BEST YOU COULD DO IN ALL THOSE CENTURIES?
POOR BLAZE, METAL SKIN AND A SHOTGUN IN PLACE OF HIS MANHOOD...AND A SORCERER WITH THE SUBTLETY OF A FREIGHT TRAIN?
ARROGANT S.O.B.! I'LL BURN THAT SMIRK—
ZRAAK
TKOOM
YOU'LL DO NOTHING MORE THAN WHAT I WANT, JOHN BLAZE— WHERE I WANT IT DONE!
—RIGHT OFF YOUR FACE!
—NO, KID, DON'T SHOOT— HE'S MOVED YA AROUND BEHIND—

FWKROOSH
NO! I DIDN'T--
FEELS GOOD, DOESN'T IT, BLAZE?
I'M SURE YOU'VE SUFFERED MORE THAN YOUR SHARE OF MANIPULATION IN THE OLD MAN'S "CARETAKING"--
--AND YOU'VE JUST BEEN WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO PAY HIM BACK!
AT THE VERY LEAST, IT HAD TO FEEL BETTER THAN WHAT STRANGE HAD IN MIND FOR ME!
TKOOM
I EXPECTED MORE FROM YOU, SORCERER! YOUR REPUTATION PROMISED CUNNING AND THE EAR OF THE VISHANTI--
-- NOT AN 800-POUND GORILLA WITH A COMMAND OF THE BLACK ARTS! I SUPPOSE I MUST LEARN TO LIVE WITH DISAPPOINTMENT--AS DO YOU!
TKOOM
KPOW KPOW
BACK ME UP HERE, STACY! LET'S PUT THESE PERPS DOWN!
I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU, SAM, JUST LET ME LOAD--
OH, GOD-- REALITY CHECK--
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO --I JUST CAN'T--
--SAM, LOOK AROUND US. WHAT'S THE POINT?

ZRKOOM
I'VE BEEN TELEPORTED AWAY FROM THE BATTLE!
YOU WANT CUNNING... PATRIARCH? HOW ABOUT SOME... ADVICE... INSTEAD?
ZRAAK
DON'T SCREW WITH... AN 800-POUND GORILLA!
THE LONG-DEAD SOLDIERS RISE, THEN, FROM THEIR TOMBS BELOW THE TOR, SHAKING OFF HUNDREDS OF YEARS WITH EACH LURCHING STEP.
SO MANY— FROM ALL OVER!
THEY'RE CUTTING US OFF FROM EACH OTHER!
ANY CELEBRATION AT THIS MIRACLE OF LIFE MUST BE PUT OFF AS THE TROOPS ARE EXPOSED ONCE MORE TO THE THRILL OF BATTLE!
AND THE OLD WAYS OF STRATEGY AND WARFARE MAKE CRACKED BONE AND RUSTED WEAPONS FEEL LIKE NEW. SUCH IS THE POWER OF STRANGE'S TERRIBLE DISTRACTION.

--ABANDON--
DON'T WORRY, BROTHERS, I'M COMING!
I WON'T--
WHO'S GONNA CATCH YOU ON THE WAY DOWN, FALLEN?
'CAUSE AIN'T NOTHIN' GONNA SAVE YOUR SORRY SELF NOW!
YOU SHOULD'VE GIVEN MORE THOUGHT TO YOUR OWN SURVIVAL, METARCHUS!
IT'S NOT ME YOU'RE DEALING WITH, VENGEANCE! IT'S GRAFFICANE OF THE 3RD CIRCLE-- IT'S NATASKA FROM--OPINICUS--
WHAT-- BY THE BLOOD! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
AFTER ALL THIS TIME ...WHO'D A' THOUGHT THESE CLOWNS HAD IT IN 'EM?
--NO, STAY BACK, ALL OF YOU, STAY AWAY!
THE BRAND...

ARRRG!
METARCHUS SUFFERS--
--AND I'M FORCED TO TAKE ON THE IGNORANT DRONE'S PAIN!
THIS CANNOT--MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE!
PATRIARCH, THIS PATHETIC TROOP NO LONGER AMUSES ME! THEY'RE NO LONGER WORTH OUR TIME!
BY YOUR DECREE, LORD ZARATHOS!
TKOOM
GET YOUR BLOOD-BUTTS BACK HERE AND FIGHT, YOU SORRY PIECES OF--
COME ALONG... BROTHER AND SISTER...
TKOOM
TKOOM
TKOOM
PLAYTIME IS OVER, CHILDREN!
A WORLD AWAITS OUR SERMON OF PAIN!

THEY WANNA RUN? FINE! WE'LL CHASE 'EM TO GROUND, AND--
AND WHAT, YOU OVERMUSCLED SKELETON? THERE ANY ROOM FOR BRAINS IN WITH ALL THAT HELLFIRE?
WE NEED A STRATEGY, NOT TESTOSTERONE!
THESE ARE YOUR PEOPLE, CARETAKER! CAN'T YOU FOLLOW THEM?
IF HE CAN, HE'S BETTER THAN ME. LINDA'S GOT NOTHING ON HER SENSORS!
NOTHING TO GET, FRANKY. THEIR SCENT WENT WITH THEM. WHATEVER--THE SUPERNATURAL TRAIL'S DRY!
I THINK--I THINK WE REALLY MADE A DIFFERENCE THERE!
OH, YEAH... ABSOLUTELY! NICE SHOOTIN', TEX!
ARE YOU BEING SARCASTIC?
WHO? ME?
WHAT'S WITH THE SAM RAIMI REJECTS?
THAT HOCUS POCUS S.O.B. STRANGE! HE DIDN'T JUST ANIMATE THE REMAINS!
WHAT'RE YOU SAYING? HE ACTUALLY BROUGHT THEM TO LIFE?
H-HELP US... ...PLEEEASS...
OR THE NEXT WORSE THING!
GET BACK HERE, STRANGE, AND FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED! YOU CAN'T LEAVE THEM LIKE THIS!
THEY SERVED THEIR PURPOSE...THEY ARE... NO LONGER OF CONCERN.
I'LL-- I'LL DO IT, CARETAKER.
GOD HELP ME, I'LL DO IT.
WE FOUGHT --BY YOUR SIDE!
NOOO!
BRAKOOM

I'LL STIR UP AN ENERGY FIELD AROUND THIS DOORWAY--USE IT TO ZAP OURSELVES BACK TO THE NIGHTCLUB! WE'LL FIGURE OUR GAME PLAN FROM THERE!
AND I CAN GET SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED ABOUT DAN KETCH AND GHOST RIDER... ...AND WHAT THEY--HE--AND I HAVE TOGETHER!
THAT TRUE ROMANCE, IT WARMS MY HEART! OR COULD BE THAT BURRITO I HAD LAST WEEK! SORRY, STACY-GIRL, NIGHTCLUB'S NO PLACE FOR THE LIKES OF YOU, OR MR. SAM BUCHANAN!
THERE'S NOTHING WHERE YOU'RE GOING I HAVEN'T SEEN ALREADY, GRAVEDIGGER, HUNTING DARKHOLD PAGES WITH VICKI MONTESI!
YEAH, NICE JOB A' BODYGUARDIN' THERE, SAMMY! SEEN HER MUCH SINCE SHE UP AND VANISHED? AND SPEAKIN' A' VANISH--MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL, SORCERER!
I DIDN'T WANNA SAY NOTHIN' 'TIL THE OTHERS WENT THROUGH... ...DID YOU SEE THE BRANDS?
THE MARK... OF A DEAD ORDER.
THINGS'VE BEEN KNOWN TO BE REBORN --LOOK AT OUR SLAM-DANCE PARTNER, ZARATHOS! WE'LL WATCH AN' SEE.
I KNOW AT LEAST ONE WAY THIS CREW QUALIFIES FOR PICKING UP WHERE THE MIDNIGHT SONS LEFT OFF.
YOU GOTTA TAKE A TASTE OF DAMNATION BEFORE YOU CAN FIGHT AGAINST IT...

TIBET. A MONASTERY RUINS...
...ITS MISSION TWISTED FROM SALVATION TO SUBJUGATION.
ARE WE SO MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THOSE WHO OPPOSE US? NO MY FRIENDS OF COURSE NOT!
WE ALL WANT THE BEST OF WHAT LIFE-- OR WHATEVER ONE DEEMS EXISTENCE -- HAS TO OFFER!
WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE-- AND DARE I SAY IT, BETTER!-- IS THAT WE'RE WILLING TO WORK FOR OUR DESIRE--
AND DAMN THE COST TO THOSE TOO WEAK TO DO THE SAME!
NEGATIVE ENERGY-- THE EMOTIONAL ANGST OF HUMAN TRAGEDY PERMEATES THE WORLD!
AND YOU HAVE EACH BEEN BLESSED WITH THE GIFT TO TURN THAT ENERGY INTO PERSONAL POWER!
WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY!
HOW TRUE
S'THERE MORE WINE?!
DON'T NEGLECT THIS SACRED TALENT-- SOW DISASTER, PROMOTE CATASTROPHE--AND REALIZE YOUR FULL POTENTIAL! STILL, WE MUST NOT BE SELFISH! AS IN THE OLD DAYS, WE MUST SEEK THOSE WITH WHOM TO SHARE OUR MESSAGE OF SUFFERING!

YOUR SISTERS, SALOMÉ AND EMBYRRE, HAVE TURNED THEIR BACKS ON THE FOLD... BUT THERE REMAIN OTHER SIBLINGS!
SEARCH OUT FOUNDRY— MAKE HER YOUR FIRST CONVERT IN A MILLENNIUM!
CONVERT ...OR CORRUPTION?
EITHER WAY, SHE'LL HAVE JOINED US WHEN WE RETURN!
CAN I TAKE THE WINE?
TKOOM
TAKE IT ALL... BUT MOST OF ALL, TAKE YOURSELVES FAR FROM ME!
IS THIS WHY I'VE RETURNED AFTER LONG CENTURIES? TO REPLAY A ROLE FROM A DISTANT YESTERDAY?
THE FALLEN'S ENTHUSIASM, THEIR EXPECTATIONS...THEY FORCE ME BACK TO THE PULPIT, WHEN I'M NO LONGER CERTAIN I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY!
THE NEW WORLD HAS OFFERED ME NEW PASSIONS! COUPLING WITH THE DEMON-MOTHER LILITH!
FINDING THE STRENGTH TO FINALLY DEFEAT GHOST RIDER BY ABSORBING HIS POWER WITHIN!
DO I DARE OVERLOOK THE POSSIBILITIES OF MY RESURRECTION? DO I WANT TO SETTLE FOR A TIRED REPEAT OF WHAT WAS?

GAAARRKK
TWISTING DEEP INSIDE ME--
--IT'S AGONY!
KRAASH
THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I LET MY FEELINGS TAKE CONTROL--TORTURING MYSELF WITH FOOLISH ANXIETY!
WHAT RIGHT DO I HAVE TO COMPLAIN?
I-I HAVE SO MUCH TO BE HAPPY FOR...

GIVE IT TO ME, CARETAKER--THE SPECIAL LABEL.
MY CURSED THIRST MUST BE QUENCHED!
THE NIGHTCLUB.
SOCIAL CROSSROADS OF THE BLOOD.
LISTEN UP, EMBYRRE. --WE NEED YOUR HELP!
I KNOW IT'S HERE!
I HATE THIS PLACE! STINKS OF CARETAKER'S KIND AN' ALL THEY DONE TO US--YOU, ME, DAN KETCH... GHOST RIDER...WHOEVER! ANY MORE BREW?
KRAASH
YOU'RE OUTTA LUCK...LAST ONE. AND IT'S NOT LIKE THEY STOCK THIS PLACE WITH A WHOLE LOT FIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION.
OR WHATEVER THE THREE OF US ARE--WERE. MY GOD, POOR DAN...
YOU WILL... TELL US ALL!
I'VE TOLD ALL I KNOW OF ZARATHOS ...FROM MY TIME WITH THE FALLEN...
I KNOW YOU TWO WANNA CATCH UP AN' ALL, RAYDAR--
STOP BADGERING HER, CARETAKER! MY DAUGHTER'S INTEREST IS IN LEAVING THAT EVIL BEHIND AND GETTING ON WITH HER LIFE!
--BUT WE GOT A MENACE TO STOMP, AN' YOUR LITTLE GIRL'S TIME IN THE ENEMY CAMP MAY BE THE KEY!
HEY!
DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD CHANGE BACK SO EASY, BAPALINO.
ONLY WHEN THERE'S A BEER INVOLVED. FANGS CLINK ON THE GLASS
I'D OFFER THE WORM FROM MY TEQUILA, MORBIUS, BUT I SEE YOU ALREADY GOT A BUG UP YOUR NOSE!
DRINKING TO FORGET, HANNIBAL? HOW WE AGREED TO BE NIGHTSTALKERS, HUNTING DOWN THE OCCULT--
AND INSTEAD, HERE WE BE, HOLDING HANDS WITH HELLFIRE SKELETONS AND ANTI-SOCIAL SORCERERS!
YOUR CONCERNS PALE--
KRASH

--COMPARED TO MY UNWHOLESOME HUNGER!
RIGHT, WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM, OVERBITE?
I KNOW THERE MUST BE BLOOD WHO INDULGE IN THE VERY THING I AM SLAVE TO!
SORRY, VAMPIRE..."BLOOD" AIN'T THAT DESCRIPTIVE... BUT YOU'LL FIND SOMETHIN'... PALATABLE...UNDER THERE.
...CARE FOR SOME, KING?
I WANT IT, MORBIUS...BUT MY FORM OF BLOODSUCKER DON'T NEED IT. I TRY TO KEEP THAT IN MIND.
ARE YOU GOING TO SAY SOMETHING, BLADE? SOME SELF-RIGHTEOUS PROCLAMATION FROM THE GREAT VAMPIRE HUNTER?
NO, MAN. NOT ANYMORE.
EVER SINCE MY TIME AS "SWITCHBLADE" ...THE MASSACRE I CAUSED...
WE ALL GOT HORRORS WE AIN'T PROUD OF...
EMBYRRE...RAYDAR ...I'D PREFER TO BE ALONE FOR AWHILE!
THERE'S NO NEED FOR SHAME, FRIEND MORBIUS! YOUR COMPASSION FOR OTHERS FAR OUTSHINES YOUR DARKER SIDE!
YOUR SELFLESS ACTS ARE WHAT LED TO MY DAUGHTER AND I REUNITING...AND IT'S FOR THAT WE THANK YOU ONCE MORE!
ZARATHOS HAD NO RIGHT TO DRIVE A WEDGE INTO YOUR FAMILY!

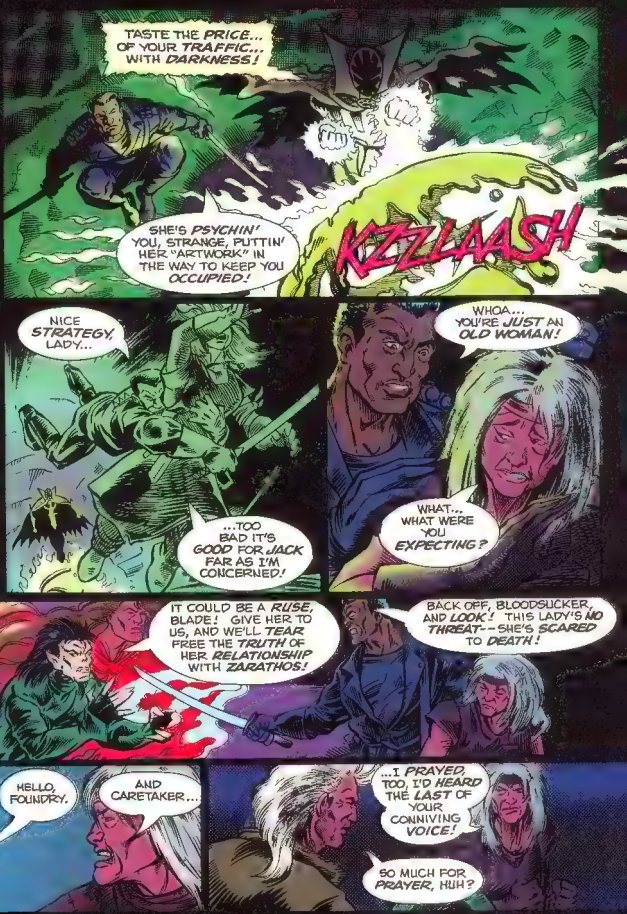
LOSING THOSE YOU LOVE...
YEAH, THAT'S THE WORST PAIN!
WE'VE ALL FELT THAT KIND OF HURT!
I KNOW WHAT YOU SEEK, JOHN BLAZE! I WOULD GLADLY ARM YOU WITH KNOWLEDGE TO USE AGAINST ZARATHOS--
I HAVE NO LOVE OF HIM ANY LONGER--
--BUT I WAS TOO DAZZLED BY THE POWER OF HIS WORDS TO UNDERSTAND ANY DEEPER MEANING!
YOU SHOULD CONSULT FOUNDRY-- SHE WAS THE REAL STUDENT OF HIS INNER WORKINGS IN THE OLD DAYS!
FOUNDRY'S STILL ALIVE?! WHERE?!
MY TALENT TO LOCATE ANYONE I HAVE EVER MET CAN TELL US THAT!
THEN DO IT, CHROME DOME! 'CAUSE IF THAT CRUSTY OL' BROAD'S STILL KICKIN', IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE ZARATHOS WILL WANT HER FOR HIMSELF!

JACK'S GOOD TIME BAR AND GRILL, NEW YORK CITY.
SOCIAL CROSSROADS OF THE LONELY AND ALCOHOLIC.
KAY, I GOT YOUR DRINKS.
WE'VE GOT SOMETHING IN COMMON, BUCHANAN, BOTH LOSING SOMEONE WE CARED FOR...
SOMEONE WE SHOULD'VE BEEN WATCHING OUT FOR. YEAH. YOU WITH KETCH, ME WITH VICKI.
--GUNS?!
OMIGOD, I DON'T WANNA BE AN INNER CITY STATISTIC!
CHILL, SISTER. N.Y.P.D.
INTERPOL.
I DIDN'T KNOW THE VCR WAS HOT, HONEST! VINNIE COULD GET 'EM CHEAP, AND I REALLY WANTED TO WATCH SEINFELD, AND --
UH-HUH. WELL, WE'LL LET IT GO THIS TIME... ASSUMING THERE'S ANYTHING LEFT IN THIS BOTTLE!
I'LL NEVER EVEN SO MUCH AS LOOK AT ANOTHER VIDEOTAPE, LET ALONE WATCH ONE!
THE WAY YOU KEEP LOOKING AT YOUR GUN, STACY... YOU'RE WORRIED, AREN'T YOU? THAT YOU CHOKED BACK THERE... ON THE TOR...
NO, TRUTH BE TOLD, I WAS WONDERING HOW YOU CONVINCE YOURSELF TO DEAL WITH ALL THIS.
YOU ACTUALLY THINK BULLETS MAKE A DIFFERENCE AGAINST THINGS LIKE WE'VE SEEN?

IN MY REALITY, THE ONLY "THINGS" ARE PERPS!
AND A 9 MILLIMETER AUTOMATIC PUTS THEM BEHIND BARS OR BELOW GROUND, NO MATTER HOW INHUMAN THEY MAY SEEM!
LISTEN TO YOURSELF! YOU LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE A MAN IN A SPIDER COSTUME CRAWLS WALLS AND THUNDER GODS SAVE CITIES!
IS THIS SO HARD TO BELIEVE?
WHAT'S DIFFERENT IS IT'S DARKER, SAM, DARKER THAN YOU OR I OR ANYBODY MIGHT EVER WANT TO KNOW!
IT'S EASY TO BELIEVE IN THE HEROES OF LIGHT, BUT NOT SO NICE TO WONDER WHAT PROTECTS THE SHADOWS!
THEY NEED US TO BELIEVE -- TO BELIEVE IN THEM -- BECAUSE WE'RE THEIR ANCHORS TO REALITY!
THEY GO INTO THAT BLACKNESS FOR OUR BENEFIT, AND IF WE DON'T KEEP THE FAITH BACK HERE, THEY'RE CAST ADRIFT. FOREVER ALONE INTO THE MIDNIGHT...
THIS -- THESE EVENTS -- IT'S DIFFERENT!

DEEP IN A SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE.
A ONCE-HOLY PLACE FALLEN ON HARD TIMES.
REAL CONVENIENT HOW THOSE NIGHTCLUB DOORWAYS LEAD WHEREVER YOU WANT 'EM, CARETAKER!
ANY IDEAS ON THE SCULPTURES?
I NEVER HAD AN APPRECIATION FOR MODERN ART, BIG GUY!
LET'S GO EASY ON THIS FOUNDRY, GENTLEMEN—WE DON'T KNOW FOR CERTAIN SHE'S ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE FENCE!
'COURSE SHE'S EVIL, KING. SHE'S BLOOD.
OH, NO OFFENSE.
NONE TAKEN.
Shrrf
SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL IN THE AIR...
LINDA'S SENSORS ARE LIGHTING UP ALL OVER—I GOT MOVEMENT! THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT WALL!

FWRAKOOM
SO MUCH FOR THE WALL!
NOW LET'S FIND US THE RUNNER!
NOT... FOR LONG!
KRZAAASH
THERE SHE IS!
LEAVE ME BE-- I JUST WANT TO BE ALONE!
RMBLLL


TASTE THE PRICE... OF YOUR TRAFFIC... WITH DARKNESS!
SHE'S PSYCHIN'! YOU, STRANGE, PUTTIN' HER 'ARTWORK?' IN THE WAY TO KEEP YOU OCCUPIED!
KZZLAASH
NICE STRATEGY, LADY...
...TOO BAD IT'S GOOD FOR JACK FAR AS I'M CONCERNED!
WHOA... YOU'RE JUST AN OLD WOMAN!
WHAT... WHAT WERE YOU EXPECTING?
IT COULD BE A RUSE, BLADE! GIVE HER TO US, AND WE'LL TEAR FREE THE TRUTH OF HER RELATIONSHIP WITH ZARATHOS!
BACK OFF, BLOODSUCKER, AND LOOK! THIS LADY'S NO THREAT--SHE'S SCARED TO DEATH!
HELLO, FOUNDRY.
AND CARETAKER...
...I PRAYED, TOO, I'D HEARD THE LAST OF YOUR CONNIVING VOICE!
SO MUCH FOR PRAYER, HUH?

DEEP WITHIN THE TEMPLE, A SHORT TIME LATER.
FOUNDRY'S WORKSHOP BURNS WITH WORDS HOTTER THAN THE METAL INSIDE HER FORGES.
YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME HERE--ANY OF YOU!
ESPECIALLY NOT CARETAKER!
LET THE PAST LIE BURIED, FOUNDRY! THERE'S NOTHIN' CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT NOW! LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO--
WHAT ABOUT THEM, OLD MAN? NONE OF THE BLOOD WOULD LISTEN TO MY WARNINGS ABOUT ZARATHOS UNTIL TOO LATE...
...AND NOW YOU DARE COME HERE AND THREATEN TO BRING THAT DEVIL DOWN ON MY HEAD AGAIN!
I'VE HID AWAY HERE FROM ALL HE'S DONE!
HID FROM THE TERRIBLE MEMORY OF MY BOY--KILLED BY ZARATHOS--AND THOSE WORDS...
JOIN THE FALLEN, FOUNDRY! BECOME MY APOSTATE, AND LET ME GRANT YOU THE POWER TO SEE YOUR CHILD LIVE ONCE MORE!
YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THAT KIND OF LOSS... A MOTHER FOR HER SON...
I CAN FEEL FOR YOU, OLD WOMAN, AT LEAST A LITTLE!
MY OWN MOTHER, SHE WAS KILLED BY A VAMPIRE JUST AS I WAS BEING BORN!
I KNOW THAT HELPLESSNESS IN THE FACE OF THE SUPERNATURAL... THE UNNATURAL...

ALL RIGHT, ENOUGH OF THIS ENCOUNTER GROUP TOUCHY-FEELY B.S.!
I'VE GOT TO AGREE WITH VENGEANCE! WE NEED SOMETHING TO TAKE OUT ZARATHOS ...AND WITH HIM OUT OF THE WAY, WE'LL ALSO BE RID OF THE FALLEN!
YOU'RE GOIN' ABOUT IT BASS-ACKWARDS, MEDALLION-BOY!
ZARATHOS DRAWS HIS NEGATIVE ENERGY FROM THE FALLEN, AND THEY GOTTA GO DOWN BEFORE HE'LL FALL!
A WEAKNESS ...WE CAN EXPLOIT!
I FEEL LIKE AN IGNORAMUS! WHY DIDN'T I SEE IT SOONER?
HARD TO BELIEVE, CARETAKER! YOUR SPITTING AND SHOVEL-CARRYING ALWAYS MADE YOU SEEM SO SHARP!
THAT'S IT, THEN— WE TARGET THE FALLEN ONE BY ONE, AND WATCH 'EM BURN!
WON'T BE THAT EASY, MACHO-MEDALLION!
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING THAT CAN STRIKE THE KILLING BLOW AND DISCHARGE THAT POWER! BUT I WAS SCARED! I NEVER HAD THE COURAGE TO TAKE THE FINAL STEP AND TEMPER IT!
THE FALLEN ARE LIKE BATTERIES, CONSTANTLY DRAWING AND STORING ENERGY.
WHAT'S THE WORRY, FOUNDRY? THE METAL GOES INTO THE WATER, AND--
NOT FOR THIS STEEL.
IT MUST BE TEMPERED IN BLOOD.
YEAH, SURE! "FANGS R US"!
IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES, WOMAN, KING AND I CAN SUPPLY WHAT YOU NEED!
NO... NOT BLOOD.
BLOOD.
ME.

OLD FOUNDRY'S HIDDEN HERSELF WELL...
...BUT IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME!
AND NOW SHE'S RUN OUT OF THAT, HMM?
SMELL THE GREEN-- YUM! OH, IT REMINDS ME SO OF THE OLD TIMES!
MMM...OLD CAMPAIGNS!
"THOSE WERE HEADY TIMES, EH? SPREADING CALAMITY AMONG THE HUMANS...AND SUCH POWER FOR OURSELVES!"
WHY THE LONG FACE, ATROCITY?
OH-OH-OH, YES-YES-YES--YOU WERE SWEET ON THAT ONE DOWN HERE, WEREN'T YOU? WHAT WAS HER NAME AGAIN?
XOC.
HER NAME WAS XOC.
COME, COME, BROTHER! YOU KNOW HOW THESE THINGS MUST BE...

...ALL RELIGIONS DEMAND SOME FORM OF SACRIFICE!
SMELL THAT STINK? THE FALLEN...
WE ALL DON'T SHARE YOUR ODOROUS SENSITIVITY TO THE OCCULT, BLADE, BUT THE EXORCIST CONFIRMS IT-- THEY'RE HERE!
THE FALLEN?! NO NO NO!
YOU'VE DONE THIS, YOU'VE BROUGHT MY PAST BACK TO HAUNT ME!
DON'T FLATTER US, WOMAN-- THEY WERE COMIN' FOR YA, ANYWAY!
NOW, HERE'S HOW WE'RE GONNA STOP 'EM--
ENOUGH, CARETAKER!
THE BLOODSUCKER'S RIGHT-- WE CAN MAKE OUR OWN DECISIONS!
YOUR KIND ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FALLEN--WE DON'T NEED YOU PLOTTING OUR STRATEGY!
ME AND VENGEANCE --AND YOU, STRANGE-- WE'LL PLAY MUSCLE AND TARGET ZARATHOS!
WE'LL HIT THE CHIEF S.O.B. SOON AS THE REST OF YOU'VE GOTTEN THE DROP ON THE FALLEN!
VERY WELL... ENTER THE MYSTIC ...GATEWAY...
...FROM HERE...
...TO ZARATHOS!
AND AS ONE GROUP OF WARRIORS TRAVELS HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD TO TAKE POSITIONS FOR BATTLE...

...OTHER TROOPS MOVE INTO THEIR OWN ATTACK FORMATION.
FOUNDRY... HOW DELIGHTFUL TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
ATROCITY'S A SMOOTH TALKER, ISN'T HE, OLD WOMAN? HARD TO RESIST, ISN'T IT?
YOU'LL JOIN US THIS TIME, YES YES YES YES YOU WILL!
I'LL NEVER TAKE YOUR SIDE!
YOU'VE TWISTED WHATEVER GOOD OUR KIND HAVE EVER DONE, AND MADE THE BLOOD ASHAMED OF WHO WE ARE!
OH, I DON'T THINK GRANDMA LIKES US!
AGE HAS ADDLED YOUR BRAIN, FOUNDRY!
THERE'S NO OTHER EXPLANATION FOR SPEAKING TO US -- TO ME -- IN SUCH AN ARROGANT TONE, OLD WOMAN... ...OR BEING SO FOOLISH AS TO FACE US LIKE THIS ALONE!
I'M NOT ALONE, FALLEN!

YOU MIGHT WISH SHE WERE!
MIGHT WISH FOR A QUICK DEATH, TOO!
DON'T KNOW IF I WANNA BE THAT NICE ABOUT IT! THEY'VE DRAGGED THIS ON FOR CENTURIES ...AND DRAGGED THE BLOOD DOWN IN THE PROCESS!
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE CAN CHANGE SHAPE, METARCHUS!
LESS TALK, KING ...MORE TEARING OF FLESH!

GIMME A HAND HERE, CARETAKER!
THE BRAND AGAIN...
A SHOVEL'S GOOD, TOO!
KRAKOOM
I NEVER KNOW WHAT LINDA'S NANOTECH IS GOING TO DO— ATROCITY WENT RIGHT TO DUST!
THE DUST— IT'S MOVING!
IT'S ATROCITY!
YOUR SAD DEPENDENCE ON MACHINERY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH MY TRANSFORMATION, NIGHTSTALKER!
MY BODY COMMUNES WITH THE ELEMENTS— AND THEY REACT AGAINST MY OBSCENE PRESENCE MOST VIOLENTLY!
YOUR TEETH ARE SO SHARP, WOLFEN--
--THEY INSPIRE ME!
GET BACK, KING, SHE'S CHANGING!

HANNIBAL!
WORRY FOR YOURSELF, VAMPIRE!
AH, YOU DISTEND LIKE THE RODENT YOU ARE--
--BUT I'VE ONLY TO GRIND MY TEETH CLOSER TOGETHER ...OR GROW SOME NEW ONES!
TKOOM
YOUR WEAPONS ARE TELEPORTED AWAY, SWORDSMAN, EASILY DISMISSED--
--AS ARE YOU!
FWRAAK
THERE'S-- THERE'S NO HOPE!
I CAN'T--I CAN'T JUST STAND AND WATCH!
FOUNDRY! FOUNDRY, WAIT!
YOU RUN LIKE A LITTLE BOY TO HIS MOMMA, BLADE! BUT SHE CAN'T PROTECT YOU-- NO ONE CAN!
BRING THEM BACK, ATROCITY!
ALIVE?
OH, I SUPPOSE "BARELY" WILL DO JUST FINE.

IT'S COME TO THIS...AND I DON'T HAVE THE COURAGE...
POUNDRY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
THE SWORD ...YOU WERE GOING TO...
NOTHING, BLADE. I'M TOO OLD AND TOO WEAK, AND ALL I'M GOOD FOR IS NOTHING.
I CALLED IT "JUSTICIAR" --THE JUDGE.
ALL GOOD SWORDS GOT TO HAVE A NAME, THAT IT? EXCALIBUR, DURANDAL, BALMUNG...
I WANTED WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO WITH IT TO BE FAIR AND IMPARTIAL, TO SET THINGS RIGHT...
...BUT I DON'T SUPPOSE IT'S ANY BETTER THAN CARETAKER AND HIS PRECIOUS "SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE"
JUST A WAY FOR ME TO GET MY REVENGE FOR WHAT WAS DONE TO MY BOY...
YOU KILLED YOUR CHILD, POUNDRY, BY REFUSING OUR OFFER TO JOIN US THEN...
...KILLED HIM JUST AS IF YOU'D CRUSHED THE SOFT PARTS OF HIS SKULL YOURSELF!
MAYBE AFTER YOU BECOME FALLEN NOW, ZARATHOS WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO BRING YOUR BABY BACK...
...ALTHOUGH I'D THINK ROTTED BONE WOULD LACK SOMETHING WHEN IT CAME TO CRADLING A LOVED ONE IN YOUR ARMS!

WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT LOVE, FALLEN?
HRSSSS
I'M SORRY...
DON'T BE.
THANK— THANK YOU--!
MY EYES!
SLKAASH
I'M BLIND! I'M BLIND!
THAT'S OKAY, ATROCITY...
AIN'T NOTHING LEFT FOR YOU TO SEE.

METARCHUS'S MANY ARMS HOLD YOU TIGHT... AND WILL SOON SQUEEZE THE LIFE FROM YOUR FREAKISH BODIES! MY TONGUE WATERS FOR THE TASTY GRIEF YOUR DEATHS WILL PROVIDE!
ATROCITY?!
ATROCITY!
THUMMP
HUNGRY FOR SOME GRIEF, PATRIARCH?
CHOKE ON THIS!
METARCHUS!
SLAASHK

NOW FEEL OUR CARESSES, MONSTER!
I- I'VE GOT ALL OF HISTORY'S CREATURES-- TO DRAW ON--IN MY DEFENSE!
THEY ALL TASTE THE SAME TO ME!
PLEASE...
WE'LL MAKE IT QUICK... THAT'S ALL I CAN PROMISE!
GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU HERE, FALLEN...
TKOOM
A FINE WEAPON, BLADE... FORGIVE ME IF I DON'T STAY AROUND TO ADMIRE HOW YOU USE IT!
FOUNDRY FORGED THIS STEEL LONG ENOUGH TO REACH YOU, NO MATTER WHERE YOU TRY AND RUN, PATRIARCH!
SKRZZ
DISRUPTING --MY TELEPORT FIELD--!
DON'T SCRAPE YOUR KNUCKLES, CARETAKER-- I'VE GOT HIM COVERED!
THAT BIG GUN A' YOURS PROBABLY DOES THE TRICK ON HIM, DRAKE, BUT THIS HERE DOES IT FOR ME!
KRAKOOM

I PROMISED... I PROMISED HER IT'D BE QUICK...
NO PROBLEM, KING.
IT SEEMS LIKE...
I DON'T WANT TO HAVE BECOME A MURDERER...
DON'T WORRY YOURSELF NONE, DRAKE.
THESE FALLEN KISSED OFF LIFE THE MOMENT THEY LET ZARATHOS START USIN' 'EM...
...FEEDIN' OFF THE NEGATIVE ENERGY THEY GATHERED SO'S THEY COULD NEVER ACHIEVE ANY REAL POTENTIAL.
WHO THEY WERE AND ALL THEY COULD'VE BEEN, DIED A LONG TIME AGO.
PTOO
USING... USING US? ALL ALL FOR NOTHING, THEN..
I'M SORRY, XOC...SO SORRY...

TIBET.
THE WORLD BELOW THRUMS WITH LUSH POSSIBILITY...
...WHILE I TRAP MYSELF IN THESE SNOWY WASTES, PRISONER TO WHO I WAS SO LONG AGO!
AGGK
AGAIN THE PAIN - DEEP INSIDE!
THIS IS THE PRICE I PAY FOR MY WEAKNESS AND WORRY.
SEE HOW HE WENT DOWN?
IT'S GOTTA BE THE RESULT OF THE OTHERS BEATING THE THE FALLEN!

THEN THE TIME...TO STRIKE...IS NOW!
WE KNOW THE SECRET OF YOUR POWER, ZARATHOS--!
AND WE KNOW YOU'VE GOT THAT EMPTY FEELING!
KRAKADOOM
THE ONLY THING "EMPTY" MUST BE YOUR HEAD, VENGEANCE-- --FOR BEING IDIOT ENOUGH TO ATTACK ME UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE!
THAT COULD'VE GONE BETTER...
HE'S STILL PULLING JUICE...
"...BUT FROM WHERE?!"
AND, IN THE NIGHTCLUB...
IT HURTS, DADDY--SO MUCH!
WAVE AFTER WAVE --PAIN TEARING THROUGH ME!
EMBYRRE, SWEETHEART, I'LL--
--I'LL FIND A WAY TO MAKE IT BETTER, TO MAKE IT STOP! I PROMISE!

IN THE JUNGLE...
I'M PICKIN' UP A MENTAL SIGNAL FROM STRANGE...
SOMETHIN'S WRONG! ZARATHOS AIN'T DOWN--HE'S STILL AS STRONG AS EVER!
HOW CAN THAT BE? WITHOUT THE FALLEN ACTING AS HIS "POWER GENERATORS"...
ARE ANY OF THEM STILL ALIVE? FEEDING HIM ON A BASE LEVEL?
NOTHING, FRANKY! THEY'RE STONE COLD!
NO, BLADE, NOT ALL OF THEM!
DEAR GOD, PLEASE LET ME BE WRONG...
THAT FISSURE, CARETAKER--- USE IT TO SEND ME BACK TO THE NIGHTCLUB!
WHAT'S YOUR GAME, MORBIUS?
JUST DO IT, OLD MAN!
HOW'S ABOUT I FIND A DOORWAY BIG ENOUGH FOR ALL A' US?
FOLLOW WHEN YOU CAN, BLOOD.
BUT DON'T BE SO EAGER TO JOIN ME IN THIS DAMNATION...

IN THE NIGHTCLUB...
MORBIUS THANK GOD! EMBYRRE ...SHE'S...YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME HELP HER!
I'LL HELP US ALL, RAYDAR... BY KILLING YOUR DAUGHTER!
WHAT?!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
SHE'S A SORCERESS AND I'M SURE SHE'S TAKEN STEPS TO PROTECT HERSELF AND HER AGENDA!
EMBYRRE'S AN INNOCENT IN ALL THIS... AND THERE'S NEVER ENOUGH PROTECTION FOR THOSE SIMPLE SOULS
ZARATHOS HAS BEEN USING THE FALLEN TO CHANNEL NEGATIVE ENERGY INTO HIMSELF... AND EMBYRRE'S THE LAST OF HIS "BATTERIES"!
N-NO... NO! THERE'S SALOMÉ, TOO...
I'M- -I'M NOT GIVING IN, MORBIUS! I WON'T DIE NOT NOW THAT I'VE FOUND MY FATHER AGAIN!
WE'VE A LIFETIME OF CATCHING UP TO DO--AND OUR HAPPINESS TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER ANYTHING ELSE!
I'M SORRY YOU FEEL THAT WAY...

...AND I'M SORRY IT HAS TO BE THIS WAY!
DON'T—DON'T MAKE ME BURN YOU!
DEATH IS THE ONLY WAY TO STOP ME, WOMAN--
--JUST AS YOUR OWN PASSING IS THE ONLY WAY TO STOP ZARATHOS'S TRAIL OF MISERY!
STOP THIS MADNESS! BOTH OF YOU--STOP!
I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU, EMBYRRE...
...BUT NEITHER WILL I SEE YOU EXIST AS A SLAVE TO ZARATHOS!
THROUGH ONE OF THE NIGHTCLUB'S TRAVEL DOORS--
--AND OUT TO A TIBETAN PLATEAU COVERED IN SNOW AND BLOOD.
THE POWER OF THE MEDALLION PALES BEFORE MY OWN ENERGIES!
IT'S EXHILARATING!

THIS IS FOR YOU, MY LITTLE EMBYRRE...
ZARATHOS!
ANOTHER COMES TO TEST MY PATIENCE AND MIGHT?
FWROOSH
RAYDAR?
DAMNATION...
FATHER?
FATHER!
I--I FEEL HIS PAIN...
...AND IT IS MY OWN!
FATHER...
THIS--THIS BEARS YOUR SIGNATURE, ZARATHOS, SUDDEN, AND WITHOUT MERCY.
I AM ONLY A PREACHER, DEAR EMBYRRE, NOT A GOD... I ADMIT TO MY FAILINGS, AND APOLOGIZE FOR MY MISTAKES!
BUT THERE IS NO NEED TO GRIEVE... NOT WHEN THE UNION OF OUR POWER MAY BE ENOUGH TO BRING HIM BACK TO YOU!

WILL YOU START BELIEVING HIS LIES AGAIN, EMBYRRE? YOUR BELOVED FATHER'S DEAD, WOMAN. YOU'VE NOTHING LEFT TO LIVE FOR.
WILL YOU TAKE THE HAND OF THE GOOD-AS-UNDEAD, DEAR GIRL? OR STAY WITH ME TO ENJOY ALL LIFE HAS TO OFFER, IF ONLY WE REMAIN STRONG ENOUGH TO SEIZE IT!
END IT, EMBYRRE, END IT NOW!
WHY... WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?
BECAUSE NO ONE ELSE WILL WALK THIS PATH...
...THIS PLACE OF SHADOWS, WHERE WE DO WHAT MUST BE DONE, NO MATTER THE COST!
CURSE YOU BOTH!
AARKKGG
WE GET FREQUENT FLIER MILES FOR THESE NIGHTCLUB DOORWAYS, CARETAKER?
YA GET A SHOVEL UPSIDE YOUR POINTY-EARED HEAD, KING, YA DON'T SHUT UP WITH THAT CRACKIN' WISE!
LINDA'S NOT PICKING UP ANYTHING IN THE WAY OF SUPERNATURAL NEG-ENERGY--ZARATHOS IS DRY!

NOT UNTIL HE IS DRAINED... OF WHATEVER... PASSES FOR BLOOD!
STOP CUTTIN' IN ON ME AND THE MORB-STER'S ACTION, STRANGE!
YOU SAID, "THE POWER OF THE MEDALLION PALES..."-- YOU'RE LOOKIN' PRETTY PASTY YOURSELF, ZARATHOS!
EXHILARATING, ISN'T IT?

YEAH!
KICK THAT SKULL-FACED MOTHER'S--
--UH-OH!
DID YOU THINK MY ABILITIES DEPENDED SOLELY ON THE FALLEN?
THOSE DEGENERATE BLOOD FED MY HUNGER, YES--
--BUT ONLY ADDED TO THE FEROCIOUS ELEMENTAL STRENGTH THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY BIRTHRIGHT!
KRAKOOM
THE FALLEN WERE NOTHING MORE THAN SHEEP... WHILE I AM A LION!

FEEL LIKE GOIN' ON A SAFARI, BLAZE?
ALWAYS DID WANT ONE OF THOSE POLITICALLY-INCORRECT LIONSKIN RUGS!
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD THANK THE LOT OF YOU! YOU'VE FREED ME FROM MY OBLIGATION TO THOSE FALLEN—
--AND GIVEN ME THE LIBERTY TO INDULGE MY NEW DESIRES IN WHAT'S SOON TO BE MY NEW KINGDOM!
IT'S YOUR HIDES THAT ARE DESTINED FOR MY TROPHY ROOM, "SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE!"
HyIIAARG!
THE TORMENT INSIDE--RETURNS ONCE MORE!
I HAVE NEVER LEFT, OLD ENEMY!

I REMAIN AT THE CORE OF YOUR BEING, WHERE YOU FOOLISHLY ABSORBED MY ESSENCE--
--GATHERING MY STRENGTH TO REND YOU FROM WITHIN!
GET HIM OUT OF HERE! GET HIM OUT!
LOOKS LIKE WE GOT AN INSIDE MAN ON THIS JOB!
GHOST RIDER'S A SKELETON.
YOU GONNA GIVE ME A SPEECH ON SEMANTICS, OR SHOOT?
FWKOOM
DON'T THINK THIS LETS YOU OFF THE HOOK, VENGEANCE--I CAN STILL LECTURE YOU LATER!

FOR ALL THE INNOCENTS BRUTALIZED, ZARATHOS--FOR ALL THE INNOCENCE YOU'VE POISONED--
THERE WILL AT LONG LAST BE VENGEANCE!
HOLD HIM TIGHT!
I'M TRYIN', BLAZE--BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER WE CAN!
WHATEVER'S GOIN' ON IS READY TO BLOW--TAKIN' US WITH IT!
THEN LET'S SEND WHAT'S SPILLING OUT BACK IN!
JUSTICIAR, SHE CALLED IT--THE JUDGE!
WE FIND YOU GUILTY, ZARATHOS...
BARBAROUS ENERGY CHANNELS BACK ALONG THE LENGTH OF THE BLOOD-FORGED STEEL.
TRATKOOM
FOUNDRY'S BLADE DISCHARGED THE FALLEN'S JUICE--I'M BETTING IT'LL DO AN OPPOSITE NUMBER ON BIG MAN HERE!
FOCUS IT BACK... AND OVERLOAD HIS BONY BACKSIDE STRAIGHT BACK DOWN TO WHATEVER PIT HE CRAWLED OUT OF!
...I CAN ONLY HOPE THE PENALTY'S SOMETHIN' WORSE THAN DEATH!

AND ALL THAT'S LEFT IN THE AFTERMATH IS A ROCKY SHELL...
...AND THE ACRID SMELL OF CHARRED BONE.
THWUMMP
YOU GOT A NASTY WAY WITH SHARP OBJECTS, BLADE.
I LIKE THAT IN A MAN.
THE THREAT ...IS ENDED.
THIS ONE, STRANGE... BUT WHAT ABOUT THE NEXT? AND THE ONE AFTER THAT...
GHOST RIDER'S THINGS... BUT NO RIDER, NO DAN.
THEY'RE GONE... HE'S GONE.
PTOO
WHAT-- WHAT DO WE DO NOW THAT IT'S OVER?
WELL... I GOT AN IDEA I'VE BEEN KICKIN' AROUND...

CYPRESS HILLS CEMETERY.
BOROUGH OF QUEENS, NEW YORK.
I DON'T KNOW... I WOULDN'T WANT IT IN MY LIVING ROOM!
IT'S NOT A CONVERSATION PIECE, VENGEANCE, IT'S...
...IT'S A REMINDER OF WHO -- OF WHAT -- WE FIGHT... AND WHY.
..AND A WARNING OF WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO CROSS US.
DEEP BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE MAUSOLEUM...
THE ORIGINAL MIDNIGHT SONS HAD A LOTTA HISTORY-- NOT ALL OF IT CLEAN, BUT ALWAYS ON THE RIGHT SIDE.
BUT IF YOU'RE WILLIN' TO GO THAT ROUTE, THINK LONG AN' HARD ON WHAT YOU'RE AGREEIN' TO!
ONCE JOINED IN THIS UNION... THE ONLY WAY OUT... IS TO JOIN THE BODIES... IN THE CEMETERY AROUND YOU.

THIS IS NOT FOR ME, CARETAKER! MY AFFLICTION HAS A SCIENTIFIC BASIS, NOT ONE THAT'S COME CRAWLING OUT OF A CRYPT!
"ARCANE'S" ONLY PART OF IT, MORBIUS. IT'S OBVIOUS YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO GO THE DIRTY DISTANCE...
...QUESTION IS, DO YOU HAVE THE NEED TO DO IT?
TO PUT YOUR EXISTENCE ON THE LINE FOR FOLKS JUST AS LIKELY TO RUN SCREAMIN' FROM YOU AS WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST...
WHAT'RE YOU WASTIN' YOUR TIME FOR THERE, BLAZE? AS MUCH A WASTE AS THIS GROUP THING--I DON'T THINK IT'S FOR ME!
IS HONORING SOMEONE'S MEMORY THAT MUCH OF A WASTE, VENGEANCE?
YOU GOT INTRODUCED TO YOUR POWER 'CAUSE YOU COULDN'T LET GO OF WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FATHER.
AS FOR THE "GROUP THING"...THE MEDALLION ALREADY MAKES US PART OF SOMETHING MORE THAN EACH OF US!
JOINING UP WITH THE REST HERE...MAYBE IT'S A WAY OF MAKING THAT FACT LESS SOLITARY. A WAY OF FEELING LESS ALONE.
A MAUSOLEUM'S A REAL SWELL PLACE TO GIVE BIRTH TO A NEW ORDER...
IT'S LIKE WE'RE STARTING OFF WITH THE STENCH OF DEATH ALREADY AROUND US!
THAT'S ONE WAY OF LOOKING, KING...BUT WE CAN'T FORGET THAT'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN ALL ABOUT ALL ALONG!
STALKING THE OCCULT... THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANYTHING BUT DESTRUCTION IN THAT.
MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING PRODUCTIVE... SOMETHING MORE THAN ANOTHER COLD SERVING UP OF REVENGE...

SO SAY WE DO GO ALONG... ARE WE SUPPOSED TO TAKE ORDERS FROM CARETAKER AND STRANGE?
YOU WERE MANIPULATIVE ENOUGH WITHOUT THE MASK, DOC!
I AM... STRANGE...
THERE'S A NEWS FLASH!
...AND I ONLY... ADVISE! YOU ALONE... TOGETHER... CHOOSE THE ACTION!
HOW ABOUT YOU, CARETAKER? YOU GONNA TRY AND PULL SOME KING OF THE MOUNTAIN BULL?
HEY, BOY, JUST LIKE THE NAME SAYS-- I ONLY UPKEEP THE JOINT!
SPEAKIN' OF WHICH... THERE'S THIS LITTLE NUMBER I'VE KEPT SPIT AN' POLISHED—
SHRAAK
WHAT I WAS ABLE TO PIECE TOGETHER FROM BACK WHEN!
IT'S SOME PARTS FROM ALL THEIR ARMOR—WHAT THERE WAS LEFT AFTER THAT LAST BATTLE—
--AND IT'S STILL GOT THE BRAND THEY WORE AN' SWORE THEMSELVES TO!

THIS AIN'T NO NAMBY-PAMBY "CALLING CARD," LADIES!
THIS THING'LL SHOW WHEN YOU'RE NEEDED TO COME TOGETHER--
--AND IT'LL HURT LIKE THE DEVIL HIMSELF UNTIL YOU MAKE TRACKS TO ANSWER THAT SUMMONS!
I'M READY THEN! LET'S DO IT!
THE SORCERER'S RIGHT, DRAKE! YOU GOT NIGHTMARES ABOUT THE FACT YOU'RE DESCENDED FROM DRACULA...
THIS IS NOT...FOR YOU... NIGHTSTALKER!
...BUT FRANKLY, THAT DON'T RATE WITH THE UPSET THE REST OF THIS CREW'S SUFFERED!
THE FACT IS, YOU'RE STILL TOO HUMAN TO BE ALLOWED SUCH AN EASY SELL-OFF A' WHAT YOU GOT!
WHO MADE YOU UMPIRE, OLD MAN? WHAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO CALL THE PLAYS?
FRANKY DON'T GO, WE DON'T GO!
I CAN'T LET THE TWO OF YOU DO THAT!
I DON'T LIKE THIS...BUT WHAT'S STARTING UP HERE, IT'S TOO IMPORTANT FOR EGOS!
I'LL STICK AROUND --A "PROBATIONARY MEMBER" OR SOMETHING --AND I'LL PROVE I'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES!

I-- I CAN DEAL WITH THIS!
HEH! I DON'T FEEL ANYTHING!
THEN YOUR FLESH— DOES NOT BURN LIKE MINE!
WHAT'S A LITTLE MORE SELF-MUTILATION?
HEY, ANYBODY FEEL LIKE BARBECUE?
ARGGK
YOU TOO, STRANGE!
I... I DID NOT EXPECT...
...BUT I FIND I DO... WANT THIS ...VERY MUCH!
TO BRING LIGHT INTO THE DARKNESS...

KRUNK
AIN'T AS GOOD AS SOME I DONE...
PTOO
...BUT WHATTA YA WANT WORKIN' WITH A SHOVEL?

OH, DARK LOVER...
I COME TO YOU FROM OUT OF THE MIST!
I CANNOT STAY LONG, LEST THESE CURSED MIDNIGHT SONS SENSE MY PRESENCE!
I TREASURE YOUR MEMORY... AND THE DEBASED MOMENTS WE SHARED!
CAN YOU EVEN FEEL MY CARESS?
I STILL FEEL YOURS, DEAR ZARATHOS...
...GROWING INSIDE! I HAVE ABANDONED MY OLD CHILDREN-- OH, TO SAY SUCH WORDS!
—SO THAT I MAY BE A DEVOTED MOTHER TO THE NEW OFFSPRING YOU AND I HAVE FASHIONED! IT WILL GROW SWIFT AND STRONG...
...AND STEEPED IN TALES OF ITS FATHER'S GREATNESS...
ANY ANSWER ZARATHOS MIGHT HAVE IS LOST-- HIDDEN BEHIND THE ICY MESSAGE THE STATUE FOREVER SENDS INTO THE DARK.
REMINDER TO THE WARRIORS BELOW OF THE MENACE THEY FACE.
AND WARNING TO ALL WHO WOULD OPPOSE THE ORDER OF THE MIDNIGHT SONS...